SANDY ISLAND CAMPS

Report for 1939 -- 41st Season, 7th of Family Camp

I. General Considerations.

There are two aspects to any consideration of Sandy Island at the moment, hurricane clearance, the costs of which Mr. Roehrig can tell you of, and current operations, with which this report is largely concerned.

As of September 1, it appears that current income and operating expense have just about balanced at $8000, a figure twenty percent below that of 1938. I trust that when we meet to discuss this report I shall be able to report exactly how operating accounts stand.

This has been a transitional year as well as one of rehabilitation. The loss of our fine pine stand has at once hampered the program and shown us some of the potentialities of Sandy in the wider use of our island. Our concern with a richer program has somewhat changed traditional camp program offerings, and the completion of remodelling the old ice house into a fine workshop and crafts center, accomplished within our operating budget by staff labor just before camp closed, points one direction for future developments.

That we have tried to take seriously your advice to provide a richer program is evidenced by the addition of such features as mid-week forums, nature talks, tennis and swimming instruction, astronomy talks and demonstrations, some individual counselling in connection with employment and sex problems of the men. The crafts building is ready for camper wood-workers, has a photographic dark-room, space for a nature museum, an additional large room available for other uses as we discover and create demand for them.

II. Attendance Considerations.

That attendance would slump was evident from the start as campers reported plans for visiting the New York Fair or cutting a projected two weeks' stay to one for this purpose. Men's Camp ran 15-20% below last year in attendance. The first week of Family Camp was the largest in the camp's seven years, the second falling off principally because of the small number of single men enrolled.

The Jewish camper early constituted something of a problem when, in the opening week, 25% of the campers were Jewish. Without going into the arguments pro and con at this time, suffice it that we applied the 10% quota restriction and declined applications from Jewish campers who had not been with us in previous years, eliminating them entirely from Family Camp. There have, of course, been unpleasant repercussions, and I must go on record as finding Jews, man for man, superior campers, at least less of a "problem" than some other groups I might mention. I must concede, however, that it is men whom we classify as Protestants who are willing to respond to appeals for support, as of the Chair-and-Table Fund, and neither Jews nor Roman Catholics.

New Yorkers again outnumbered Bostonians.

This raises some consideration of 1940 attendance. I heard more protestation of "the finest summer ever", "I'm going to be here twice as long next year", etc. than I've heard before, and, given better business and industrial prosperity, American success in keeping out a European war, and good weather I expect a larger attendance. A better cuisine and greater satisfaction with the program should account for more returning campers. Opposing factors are continued enforcement of the Jewish quota restriction, a non-homogeneous second week of Family Camp.

This committee should consider ways and means of making it profitable for campers to bring their friends. I see no reason why Sandy should not have a constant enrollment of 80-100 in another year if hurricane clearance is completed

and if we can be smart in promoting attendance. I consider the best advertising that of the satisfied camper and consider it your duty and mine to put in a good word for Sandy where it will do the most good. In addition, it might be wise to say to the campers who brought new men in 1939 that doing so entitled them to a reduced rate in 1940. Is this feasible?

Promotion in 1939 included the printing and distribution of 10,000 camp folders, personal visits to some 20 Associations from Concord, N.H, to New Haven, Conn., showing camp movies, meeting secretaries, inviting them to be our guests at camp of a week-end. Reunions were held in New York and Boston. The camp films were mailed to various points for showing. Paid advertising was inserted in Redbook Magazine resulting in four campers out of 15 inquiries. $700 was spent on promotional activities. But the return was small: of the 450 campers fully half were old campers returning; after 41 years there are still men about our YMCA's who have never heard of Sandy; my employment from September through June is such that I cannot give Sandy the time and energy promotion requires.

The solution of this problem is in the committee's hands. Some things which might help are: the preparation each year in camp of one film of camp life, in connection with which I have for some time urged the Boston YMCA to acquire 16 mm. equipment for use, on a schedule, in all its departments. Also, if we face squarely the fact of our competition with other vacation places, and admit that we must give our campers a memorable and good time, we may have to add certain activities we have tried to discourage, such as weekly dance trips (which will also include bowling, beano halls, beer-heisting) or somehow recognize that many young unmarried men, chose vacation spots in hopes of meeting the girl. At camp we have endeavored to recognize this urge by fostering inter-camp relations with the Geneva Point Camp of the International Council of Religious Education whose co-ed group apparently enjoys visiting Sandy as much as we enjoy having them do so.

A re-writing of the prospectus may help in this connection, my principle fear being that in making such recognitions we are getting further and further away from the spirit underlying our undertaking and misunderstanding the function of the Y in society. At the same time we must be realists and adjust ourselves rapidly to the needs of young working men, and women, for social experiences in a desirable setting.

III. Physical Status of Camp.

Logging operations have been going on since camp opened and are still in process. Instead of camp's being cleared by the opening date, the loggers have not only been very evident by their noise and dust, but have even created work which the staff has had to clean up. May I here pay tribute to the loyalty and hard work of the staff. If we were in position to declare bonuses for faithful and excellent service, even on dangerous projects, I would certainly do so.

Last winter's losses of small equipment and leaving the camp in fine shape would make me urge your support in terminating the employment of the present logging crew as soon as they can tumble into the water and raft the pile of logs now between the North Dock and Juliette's Point. They appropriated our tools, were likely not to return them, and forced us into an unexpected outlay for new tools this year,-- in addition to causing us great delays in getting camp clean enough to have campers come. I have complained, too, to Mr. Roehrig about their having to take upwards of two hours of our maintenance man's time in transporting them to and from the island daily, of their unwillingness to clean up brush piles, and of their inefficiency at many points. I have submitted to Mr. Roehrig a proposal for engaging Mr. Leslie Ford, maintenance man on my staff this season, to stay on after September 20, with or without one helper, to complete cleaning up camp and to do some building (see next section of the report).

Stump clearance had the same net effect: the staff spent much of two days clearing up after the dynamiters. There is, in fact, one problem concerning stump removal which should be brought to your attention: the stumps now piled at the lake's edge may, when the winter's ice goes out and they are free of soil, get afloat

and constitute not only a menace to boats but be the cause for court fine. There are still many stumps to be moved, and my observation is that Mr. Ford on our tractor and alone can move them faster than either Cheney's slow crew or Mr. Titus and his patented stump puller.

Tree planting has had to wait upon stump clearance. Upwards of fifty small trees varying from a foot to ten feet in height have been transplanted, and I should hope that campers and staff in another season would make this a regular part of its work. Logging operations have, perhaps of necessity, taken down a like number of trees, however, so that we cannot count much gain this season except as the trees planted were in desirable spots.

III. Building Accomplishments and Outlook

New buildings, erected by H.J. Leighton with funds appropriated by the Board of Trustees, include three small cabins, three large ones, a new toilet, a new director's cottage, a new boathouse. Remodelled buildings include the new work shop and a new tractor shed, both accomplished under the direction of Mr. Walter Hughes. Razed were the original all-purpose building known as Alhambra (by Leighton, although it took the staff three days to clear up after him) and the superstructure of the barracks called Astoria, leaving the 18 x 60 floor-space for possible use in 1940. Two new small tents were added to the housing facilities. Seven tents were discarded at the end of the season.

We should be particularly proud of Mr. Hughes' work. At a cost of less than $100 we have a building which we would value at $1200, judged by insurance valuations on other buildings in camp. The lumber necessary for remodelling was largely salvage lumber, the only cash outlays being for the side sheathing, roofing, and nails and other small hardware.

Buildings for 1940 may well include more small cabins of the type erected this year. We have at hand all materials except siding and roofing. My proposal for the continued employment of Mr. Ford called for the latter's doing this building in the very late fall or early winter, the cost of necessary materials being less than $25 per building, as against $200 for Leighton. The popularity of these small cabins, which should be easily constructed, is attested by the willingness of some campers, ordinarily hiring the small tents, to take them in preference to the tents. In 1940 these small cabins should be premium accomodations during Men's Camp.

IV. Program expansion.

Already, (in part I) I have listed some of our attempts to enrich the program of activities at Sandy. The program continues to be primarily athletic, as it probably should be, and is in Mr. Beverley Wilson's able hands. Partly from necessity and partly from inclination Mr. Wilson has supplanted hardball with softball, with attendant advantages in terms of safety and with surprising approval from other camps with whom we play. Standard inter-camp sports now include softball, tennis, and volleyball. During Family Camp we have had instruction periods in tennis and swimming.

In Family Camp, in addition to the girl who takes care of children mornings, it might be well to engage some woman especially to encourage women's activities, trying to provide for them as well-rounded a program as the men now have.

Such an eventuality, and increasing crafts and nature study opportunities means, of course, enlarging the staff budget. We want, as decided at the last meeting of this committee, to have someone at hand whose example shall be a fine advertisemen of the Christianity we are trying to foster. And as we want specialists for program enrichment, we must expect to pay higher wages to them. As presently constituted, ours is primarily a work staff: aside from myself, Mr. Ford (whose period of employment is five months) and the cooks, the staff included three earning $100 or more, one earning $90 washing dishes for the entire camp, three earning $25-35, and four getting no compensation. In view of the heavy labor the latter seven did, I felt no qualms of conscience in distributing $45 in bonuses as we decamped. They deserved moremoney.

Are we ready to increase this item in our budget. Including the bonuses, the payroll totalled $1665 this year.

V. Equipment needs.

Needs apparent now include a sailboat, some canoes and rowboats (which can be picked up second-hand as opportunities afford), a dependable outboard motor. In accordance with your instructions at our last meeting, and including the $75 expense in our operating budget, I purchased early this season a rather fine outboard hull replacing the sea-sled destroyed by the hurricane. This is less than the $125 we mentioned as a probable replacement cost.

For several years I have mentioned in my reports the need for a sailboat and have now discovered the type we ought to have,-- one with a heavy enough keel to prevent side-slipping and yet a shallow enough keel to prevent catching on the rocks of the shallow lake. It is a "Sandpiper", manufactured in Quincy, having a 400-pound keel only eight inches deep. Cost: c.$250.

The Elto 6 H.P. outboard motor we have had at camp for ten years or more has been a source of constant worry. It has had to be overhauled after nearly every trip and more often than I care to recall it has embarassed us by refusing to run when distinguished guests were aboard. For short trips to Long Island, where the automobiles are parked, we need an efficient, high power, small motor. Mr. Walter Seaman, former staff member who returned to Family Camp this season with his wife and two other couples, brought just the thing we should have,--an Evinrude 16 H.P., three-speed motor, which, attached to our hull performed creditably. Cost: c.$275.

Equipping the work-shop and developing room will, off hand, take $75-100, which amount can be absorbed in the budget.

Athletic equipment is in fairly good shape, two new sets of tennis tapes being the principal need.

VI. Memorial to Clemnens Pompey.

Campers have responded generously to the suggestion of completing the Chair- and Table Fund and generally refurnishing the dining room as constituting a suitable memorial to our late great friend and chef, Clemens Pompey who died early this summer, aged about 75. Clemens was a dear friend to those of us priveleged to know him intimately, and his fine meals and genial after-supper company are not to be forgotten. Any impetus this committee can give to the movement to memorialize him will be appreciated by the many who are working among the campers to that end.

Actual contributors number just under 100, although more have promised five dollar contributions and tabs are on all of the hundred chairs now in the dining hall. The proposal is to erect in the hall a suitable plaque bearing his name. I am sorry to report that all members of this committee have not responded to the invitation to contribute to this memorial.

VII. Other contributions.

A few campers left their one-dollar bedding deposits to the Building Fund. The Family Camp again ran a "party" charging ten cents per person, proceeeds from which bought another dining room chair and left a small surplus for general purposes. Other campers generously contributed old books and music, for which there seems to be a constant demand (as there is for some up-to-date hymnals!); one has sent us a ten-gallon drum of poison-ivy killer; another has sent us pencils, medecines. Dr. Root generously loaned us his 16 mm. camera and equipment for filming; Mr. Wheeler Becket kindly loaned us the bell of the defunct lake steamer "Gov. Endicott" to use until we could find funds to replace the fine old navy bell which disappeared. Campers especially Bryce Lockwood, Percy Karhher, and Stanley Charlton, contributed generously of their time in camp to helping in various work projects.

In closing, may I thank you for your time and thought on Sandy's problems and the wisdom of your deliberations. I feel you should be even more active in helping with the management of camp and suggest that one meeting per year at camp would do much to dissipate the charge of absentee landlordism too frequently levelled at management from Boston.

I appreciate, too, your forbearance in our dealings. Regarding my job as trouble-shooting, as I do at times, I realize how tactless I frequently am. You should understand, however, that there is nothing personal in these remarks other than my growing interest and faith in Sandy Island as a spot for Christian men and women to renew and re-create their energies. I continue to be astounded at the reactions of men to our informal Sunday services. Such remarks as "If church at home were like this, I'd go every Sunday", "I never go to church at home, but this is swell" make me feel that we are serving a need even more than we know. Which is my way of saying that I think your staff is doing a moderately satisfactory job at the island. My regret, at the moment, is not so much at my acerbity as it is that I haven't more ~~[illegible]~~ time to devote to Sandy's interests. Such a devotion is a thoroughly desirable activity and one to which I hope you will be able to give increasingly of your time and thought.

Respectfully submitted

Walter W. Taylor

Sept. 4, 1939